(c) if so, what was his reaction;

(d) whether being a Non-aligned country, India did not consult other non-aligned nations on this issue; and

(e) if so, the steps India had taken to stop this war?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes.

(b) and (c) Prime Minister had expressed deep concern about the war and its consequences, besides reiterating our consistent position that the United Nations Security Council should have decided the future course of action regarding Iraq's compliance with the Security Council's resolutions. The U.S. President conveyed his reasons for the chosen course of action.

(d) India had consulted other non-aligned nations, including during the NAM Summit in Kaula Lumpur in February 2003.

(e) India's public statements and diplomatic engagement, including with the United States, were based on the goal of seeking a peaceful and diplomatic solution within the framework of the United Nations. Although not a member of the UN Security Council, Indian expressed its position in all Open Meetings of the Security Council, including the meeting on 26 March, 2003.

Visit of sikh jathas to Gurudwaras in Pakistan

3018. SHRI SUKHBIR SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal to send sikh pilgrims (sikh jathas) for darshan/visit to historical Gurudwaras in Pakistan on the occasion of Vaisakhi;

(b) whether Government have received any representation from the Sikh organisations in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) A jatha of 100 Sikh pilgrims would visit the holy Sikh shrines in Pakistan on the occasion of Baisakhi. The Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar had earlier requested the Government to allow a jatha to visit Sikh shrines in Pakistan on the occasion of Baisakhi.

Evacuation of Indians from Iraq and Kuwait

3019. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:
SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA:
SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN:
SHRI SUKHBIR SINGH:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have drawn up any contingency plan for Indians residing in Iraq, Kuwait and other neighbouring Saudi Arabian countries which were affected due to the war;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the number of Indians to be evacuated belonging to various States as on date; State-wise;

(c) the number of Indians who have already been evicted from these countries; and

(d) the steps taken, if any, to assist the Indians who are not in a position to meet the travel expenses?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) and (b) Most Indian nationals voluntarily left Iraq before the outbreak of hostilities. Less than 20 remain, all of whom have chosen to stay. Contingency plans have been drawn up to evacuate Indians living in Kuwait through Saudi Arabia. However, the airports at Kuwait and other Gulf countries have remained open to scheduled commercial flights from the beginning of the start of the hostilities in Iraq and, therefore, there has been no request for evacuation of Indian nationals.

(c) and (d) Does not arise.